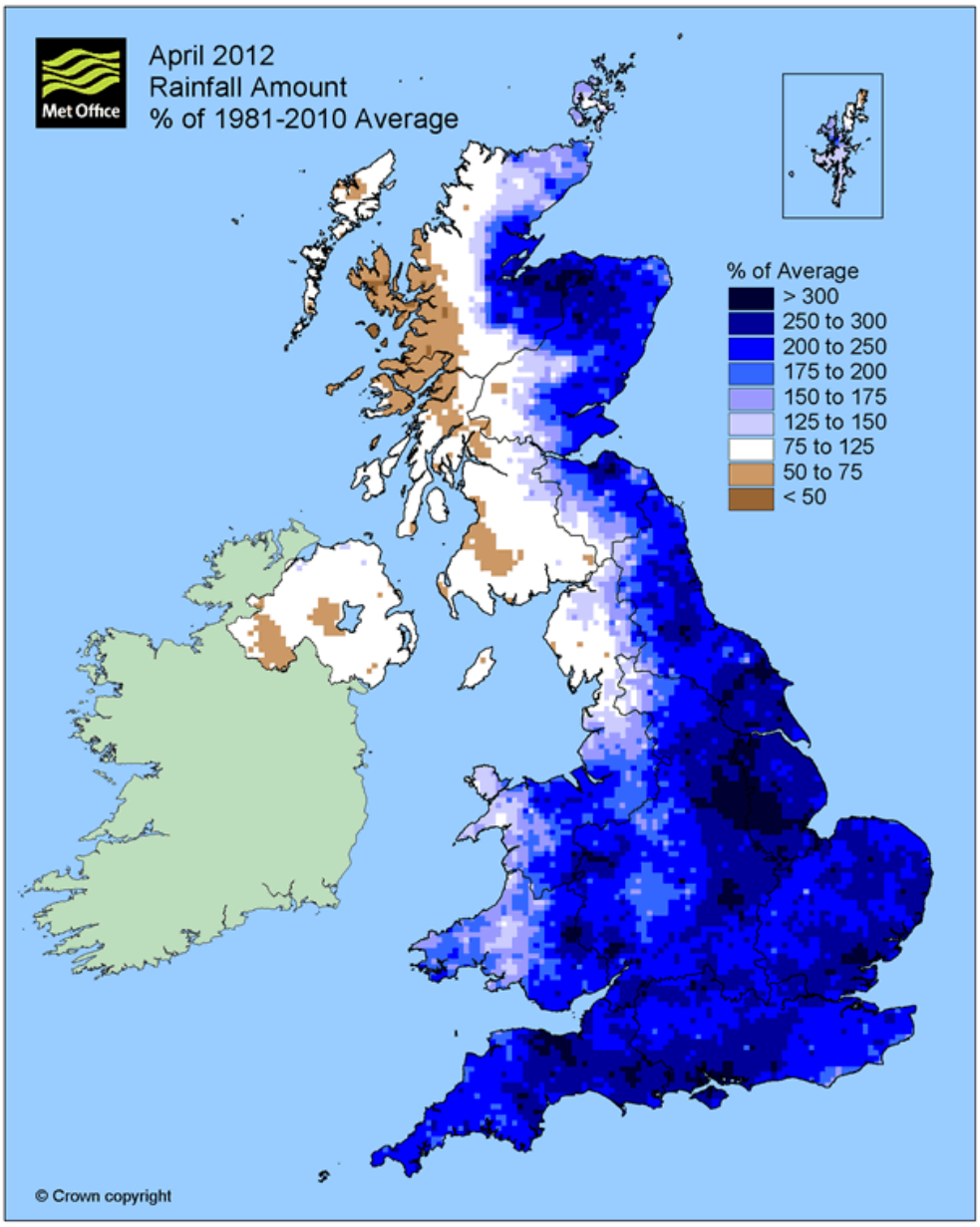
April 2012

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

April rainfall anomaly map:



With low pressure over or near the UK for most of the month, the weather was generally unsettled with numerous showery days. There was some snow in northern areas early in the month and longer spells of rain especially in the last week.

The UK mean temperature was 1.1 °C below the 1981-2010 average, and it was the coldest April since 1989. Unusually, April was colder than March (the last time that occurred was in 1998) and the temperature failed to

reach 20 °C anywhere (this last occurred in April 1989). Most of England, Wales and eastern Scotland were much wetter than normal, making it the wettest April on record across the UK (somewhat wetter than April 2000). Much of eastern and southern England, east Wales and eastern Scotland recorded well over twice the normal amount, with three times normal in places. The number of days with rain was comparable to that in April 1998, the highest in the last 50 years. Only the western fringes of Scotland and parts of Northern Ireland were drier than average. Sunshine amounts were somewhat below normal over most of the UK, but it was sunnier than usual along the west coast of Scotland, the Western Isles and the west of Northern Ireland.

A maximum temperature of 19.7 °C was recorded at Kew Gardens (Greater London) on the 30th. A minimum temperature of -8.2 °C was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) early on the 5th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on the 30th, 61.0 mm of rain fell at Storey Arms (Brecon Beacons). A wind gust of 76 mph was recorded at Warcop Range (Cumbria) on the evening of the 29th. A snow depth of 29 cm was recorded at Alwen (Conwy) at 0900 on the 4th.

Weather impacts

Winter returned early in the month with snow, ice and gales across much of Scotland, northern England and North Wales on the 3rd and 4th. This severe weather led to difficult travelling conditions and power cuts. About 10,000 homes in North-east England were without power on 4th after ice and strong winds brought down power lines. Some higher road routes in northern England and eastern Scotland were closed for a time, and there were delays on the East Coast rail line north of Newcastle. In the Cairngorms, nine hill walkers had to be rescued in heavy snow.

Heavy thundery showers and gusty winds caused localised problems in the third week of the month. On 18th, strong winds in Cornwall brought down some trees, phone and power lines and London rail commuters experienced delays on the evening of the 19th as lightning strikes disrupted services from Waterloo and Victoria.

Heavy rain and strong winds across southern Britain on 25th brought localised flooding and uprooted some trees. There were further heavy downpours across northern areas of England and Wales on 26th, and the River Ouse burst its banks on 27th, flooding some homes and businesses in York. There was a stormy end to the month with strong winds and prolonged heavy rain from 28th to 30th, especially across England and Wales. Hundreds of trees were uprooted, blocking roads and damaging power lines to leave some 12,000 properties without power across South Wales, the West Midlands and South-west England on 29th. Localised flooding affected many roads and some rail routes and there were fears of more widespread flooding as rivers rose.

Despite the numerous wet days, reservoir and groundwater levels were still very low across much of England with continuing concerns for farming, water resources and the environment generally. On the 16th, the area officially in drought was extended to counties across the West Midlands and South-west England.

England diary of highlights

With low pressure over or near the UK for most of the month, the weather was generally unsettled with plenty of showers or longer spells of rain and some snow in northern areas in the first few days.

The mean temperature was 1.0 °C below the 1981-2010 average, making it the coldest April since 1989. It was very wet across almost all areas, especially in many eastern, southern and Midland counties where well over twice the normal amount fell with three times the normal in places. It was the wettest April on record, somewhat wetter than April 2000. The number of days with rain was similar to that in April 1998, the highest in the last 50 years. Sunshine amounts were generally somewhat below normal.

1st to 2nd:

The month began with relatively settled conditions as a result of a ridge of high pressure. There were night frosts in prone locations, and sunny spells by day.

3rd to 5th:

On 3rd showers broke out ahead of a southward moving cold front, some with thunder in places. During the night into 4th rain, sleet and snow moved through northern England and then as far south as the Midlands. Drifts of snow closed some higher routes in the Pennines. Temperatures were well below average. The 5th saw sunny spells across most areas, but it stayed chilly.

6th to 9th:

The 6th saw cloud and mostly light rain moving southwards replacing early sunshine in the south. Temperatures recovered to around average, and 7th and 8th were cloudy and mild with outbreaks of rain and drizzle. The 9th continued the cloudy theme, with the rain becoming heavier in the west; more than 15 mm was recorded in parts of central southern and south-west England, with 35.2 mm at Liscombe (Somerset).

10th to 14th:

The 10th was a brighter day but with showers in many areas. The 11th saw further showers, turning thundery in the afternoon. The 12th, 13th and 14th saw more showers, often heavy with hail and thunder.

15th to 16th:

By 15th the wind became northerly, with dry cold conditions at night and showers of hail in eastern areas by day. Overnight into 16th there was a widespread frost, with temperatures as low as -4 °C in a few places. The day was mostly fine with plenty of sunshine under a brief ridge of high pressure, but the evening became cloudier in the west with outbreaks of rain by dusk.

17th to 22nd:

This period saw showers or longer periods of rain. The 17th was a wet day with heavy rain spreading eastwards in the morning, followed by showers some with hail and thunder. The 18th was a wet day too as low pressure tracked across southern England bringing rain and showers. Over 20 mm was recorded across northern areas, with 32.4 mm at Fylingdales (North Yorkshire). By the morning of 19th the low had reached eastern England, with bands of showers or more prolonged rain. On 20th, with low pressure over the North Sea, north-eastern coasts were cloudy with rain and heavy thundery showers developed elsewhere. Many of these showers lasted into 21st and 22nd, again with some hail and thunder and quite large totals in places; on 22nd over 15 mm was recorded across the south-west with 22.8 mm at Plymouth (Devon).

23rd to 30th:

The 23rd saw an area of low pressure approach from the south-west. This brought prolonged rain to southern areas, while the north was brighter but with further thunderstorms. The 24th saw a brief ridge of high pressure but across eastern areas it was still mainly cloudy with light rain, and heavy showers elsewhere. Overnight and into 25th another low moved from the south-west, bringing strong winds and very heavy rain; totals over 20mm were recorded in the south-west to 0900 on 25th with 34.4 mm at Okehampton (Devon), and over 20mm over northern areas to 0900 on 26th, with 31.1 mm at Copley and Westgate (both County Durham). The 26th saw widespread heavy and sometimes thundery showers, and further strong winds on the south coast; more than 20 mm of rain fell across west Yorkshire. By 27th a weather front brought more heavy rain to many central and southern areas, although the north was drier and brighter. The 28th was similar with outbreaks of heavy rain or showers in many areas; more than 20 mm was recorded across parts of the south with 36.6 mm at Hampstead (Greater London). The 29th saw another low developing and moving northwards towards South-west England, bringing prolonged heavy rain and very strong winds; more than 20 mm fell

widely, with 46.0 mm at Liscombe. This low moved away south-westwards on 30th allowing a relatively fine and dry day, with some sunshine in most areas.

Wales diary of highlights

With low pressure over or near the UK for most of the month, the weather was generally unsettled with plenty of showers and longer spells of rain at times.

The mean temperature was 1.1 °C below the 1981-2010 average, making it the coldest April since 1989. It was much wetter than normal, particularly towards the east and south. About twice the normal amount fell in South Wales and towards the English border, making April here amongst the wettest on record. Sunshine amounts were somewhat below average generally.

1st to 7th:

Generally quiet on the first two days, but it became more unsettled and colder on 3rd and 4th as a frontal system moved southwards with some snow on higher ground, closing the Horseshoe Pass in north-east Wales for a time on 4th. Some cold nights followed with temperatures widely down to - 4 °C early on 6th and -6 °C recorded at Sennybridge (Powys).

8th to 10th:

A milder but much wetter period as a deep area of low pressure moved across the north of the UK. A slow-moving front lying across Wales gave a very wet day on 9th with 23.0 mm being recorded at Capel Curig (Conwy), followed by a very showery day on 10th.

11th to 16th:

Several rather cool and showery days as the winds shifted to the north, with some quite heavy and thundery showers developing at times, especially over eastern parts. Generally quieter on 15th and 16th as a ridge of high pressure moved across Wales. There was a widespread frost overnight 15th / 16th with temperatures down to -3 °C in places and to -4.8 °C at Sennybridge.

17th to 24th:

It became very unsettled through this period with some spells of rain or showers, heavy at times. Another deep area of low pressure moved in from the Atlantic on 17th and 18th and became slow-moving over the UK from 18th to 22nd. A new area of low pressure moved across the south of the UK on 23rd and 24th.

25th to 30th:

It remained very unsettled to the end of the month as a deep low moved across the UK from the south-west on 25th and 26th and another developed in the western English Channel on 29th. Some very wet spells of weather occurred, especially over South Wales where some places received nearly twice the average April monthly rainfall during this period. High daily totals included 29.0 mm at Tredegar (Blaenau Gwent) on 25th and 43.6 mm at Tredegar on 29th.

Scotland diary of highlights

With low pressure over or near the UK for most of the month, the weather was generally unsettled with plenty of showers and some snow in the first few days.

The mean temperature was 1.1 °C below the 1981-2010 average, making it the coldest April since 1998. It was wetter than normal across the eastern half of Scotland, especially in parts of Aberdeenshire, Moray and Banffshire where over 250% of the normal amount fell. In eastern Scotland, it was the equal-third wettest April

on record and the number of days with rain was the highest in over 50 years. Rainfall totals were close to or below average in the western half of Scotland. It was a relatively dull month in the east, especially in Aberdeenshire, but sunshine totals were somewhat above normal along the west coast and in the Western Isles.

1st to 10th:

It was dry and bright on 1st although rain spread into northern areas during the afternoon and spread south overnight to leave a showery day on 2nd for central areas with more persistent rain for the north. The 3rd saw a band of rain, sleet and snow move south, with 22 cm of snow lying at Whitehillocks (Angus) early in the day. This cleared overnight to leave drier, brighter but still chilly days on 4th and 5th although some light, patchy rain reached north-western areas later. The rain edged further south on 6th to reach central and eastern areas before clearing overnight to give a drier and brighter day on 7th. Although the 8th started dry, a band of rain moved eastwards, clearing during the afternoon to leave scattered showers. The 9th was generally unsettled with rain or showers for most areas; 29.4 mm was recorded at Edinburgh and 28.0 mm at Tyndrum (Stirling). On 10th a band of rain, sleet and snow spread from the north during the early hours affecting eastern areas before clearing southwards during the evening.

11th to 30th:

The 11th saw frequent and heavy showers, some of hail with thunder for Dumfries and Galloway. The showers became more scattered from 12th to 14th before becoming largely confined to north-eastern areas on 15th. The 16th started bright but rain spread from the west during the late afternoon, with Lochgilphead (Argyll and Bute) recording 37.6 mm and Machrihanish (Argyll and Bute) 28.4 mm. The rain affected the north-east for much of 17th with other areas having a blustery day with scattered showers. The 18th saw more sunshine but scattered showers developed, continuing into 19th with a cool north-east wind affecting eastern and northern areas. The showers continued on 20th and 21st with some heavy bursts particularly for central areas. On 22nd and 23rd showers were widespread, frequent and at times heavy. A brisk north-east wind brought further showers to most areas on 24th before northern areas had more persistent rain on 25th with the showers more scattered for eastern and southern areas; 41.0 mm was recorded at Drumnadrochit (Highland). The 26th saw rain spread from the south during the day reaching central areas by evening with northern areas having showers and feeling cool once again in a brisk north-east wind. On 27th central and southern areas saw more sunshine and fewer showers although northern and north-eastern areas continued to have frequent, heavy showers. After a cold start on 28th, with the temperature down to -7.2 °C at Tulloch Bridge (Highland), any showers were lighter and confined to northern areas. After another cold start on 29th, with -6.4 °C at Tulloch Bridge, it was generally a better day with early sunshine, although rain spread from the south in the early evening. This reached northern areas overnight before clearing to leave a cloudy day on 30th with some drizzle for eastern coastal areas.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

With low pressure over or near the UK for most of the month, the weather was generally unsettled with plenty of showery days and temperatures generally below normal.

The mean temperature was 1.2 °C below the 1981-2010 average, making it the coldest April since 2000. Rainfall amounts were generally close to average, but it was drier than normal towards the west, with only 75% of normal in County Fermanagh. Sunshine amounts were near or somewhat above normal.

1st to 8th:

The 1st saw a bright start but some light and patchy rain spread from the west during the afternoon which continued into 2nd although this cleared later in the evening. The 3rd saw a band of rain, sleet and snow spread from the north with a cold north-easterly wind. The 4th and 5th were drier and brighter although it remained

rather chilly. The 6th and 7th saw rain for northern and eastern areas with the best of any dry weather in the south. The 8th saw a band of rain sweep south-eastwards during the afternoon affecting all areas.

9th to 24th:

The 9th to 11th saw frequent and at times heavy showers, these becoming confined to eastern areas on 12th; 18.8 mm was recorded at Altnahinch Filters (County Antrim) on 9th. The 13th once again had scattered showers and sunny spells, the showers largely dying out to give mainly dry but cooler days on 14th and 15th. It was a dry and bright start on 16th but rain spread from the west during the early afternoon to reach all areas by the end of the day, the rain clearing overnight to leave a blustery day on 17th with scattered showers. Although the winds eased on 18th the showers continued but they were generally lighter, becoming more scattered on 19th and mainly affecting western areas. Showers continued on 20th, becoming frequent and at times heavy with thunder for central and western areas. The unsettled theme continued from 21st to 23rd with frequent and sometimes heavy showers, with thunder for southern areas on 24th.

25th to 30th:

Most areas started dry on 25th but during the early afternoon rain spread from the south to reach south-eastern areas by evening and edged northwards overnight to leave a dull and wet day for much of the country on 26th. The 27th was much brighter with only a few light scattered showers but it remained cool in a northerly wind and after a chilly night the 28th was again dry with sunny spells. The 29th was generally dry and bright but rain spread from the south reaching eastern areas by early evening, clearing overnight to leave a dry but generally cloudy day on 30th.

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